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Montserrat

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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Note: The information contained in the present working paper has been derived from public sources, including those of the territorial Government, and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the administering Power under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations. Information was transmitted by the administering Power on 18 December 2017. Further details are contained in previous working papers, available from www.un.org/en/decolonization/workingpapers.shtml.

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The Territory at a glance

Territory: Montserrat is a Non-Self-Governing Territory under the Charter of the United Nations administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Representative of administering Power: Governor Andrew John Pearce, appointed in January 2018

Geography: Situated in the Leeward Islands in the eastern Caribbean, 43 km south-west of Antigua and 64 km north-west of Guadeloupe. The entire island is volcanic. In July 1995, the Soufrière Hills volcano, which had been dormant for more than 400 years, erupted with devastating effects, including the destruction of the capital, causing the evacuation and relocation of about 70 per cent of the population from the southern part of the island. The effects of that eruption and subsequent lighter volcanic activity are still being felt.

Land area: 103 km²

Exclusive economic zone: 7,582 km²

Population: 5,000 (2012 estimate)

Life expectancy at birth: 74.14 years (men: 75.64 years, women: 72.57 years (2015 estimates))

Language: English

Capital: Plymouth, abandoned in 1997 following the volcanic eruption. A new urban centre is being developed at Little Bay, on the north-west coast of the island.

Head of territorial Government: Premier Donaldson Romeo (September 2014)

Main political parties: People's Democratic Movement; Movement for Change and Prosperity

Elections: most recent: September 2014; next: due in September 2019

Gross domestic product per capita: $12,044 (UNdata, 2016)

Economy: financial services, investments, construction

Main trading partners: Canada, Japan, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America

Unemployment rate: 6.5 per cent (2013 estimate)

Monetary unit: East Caribbean dollar, pegged to the United States dollar (EC$ 2.70 equals US$1)

Brief history: Christopher Columbus named Montserrat after a monastery near Barcelona in Spain. The first European settlers, mostly Irish, arrived in 1632. The island later became a haven for indentured Irish servants transported to the British West Indies. A major slave uprising occurred on Saint Patrick's Day in 1768. In the eighteenth century, Montserrat was intermittently occupied by France, prior to its confirmation as a British Territory in 1783. It became a British Crown colony in 1871. Following the break-up of the Federation of the West Indies in 1962, Montserrat opted for Crown colony status rather than associated statehood.

I. Constitutional, legal and political issues

1. Under the Montserrat Constitution Order 2010, which entered into force in September 2011, Montserrat has a governor appointed by the British Crown, a Cabinet and a legislative assembly. The Governor is responsible for internal security (including the police force), external affairs, defence, public service and the regulation of international financial services. The current Governor took office in January 2018. Under the legislation under which the Constitution was enacted, the British Crown reserves the power, with the advice of the Privy Council of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to make laws either generally or for the peace, order and good government of Montserrat.

2. The Cabinet consists of the Premier, three other ministers and, in an ex officio capacity, the Attorney General and the Financial Secretary. The Deputy Governor, a Montserratian appointed by the Governor, attends meetings but does not have the right to vote. The Cabinet is presided over by the Governor, who does not have the right to vote within the Cabinet but is responsible for the general control and direction of the Government, and is collectively responsible to the legislature.

3. The Legislative Assembly consists of nine elected members and the same two ex officio members as the Cabinet. Elections are normally held in Montserrat every five years on the basis of universal adult suffrage. In the most recent elections held in September 2014, the Movement for Change and Prosperity, which had formed the previous Government, was defeated and the newly formed People's Democratic Movement, headed by Donaldson Romeo, won seven of the nine seats in the Assembly. In September 2014, Mr. Romeo became the Premier of Montserrat.

4. The law of Montserrat is comprised primarily of the legislation enacted by the legislature of Montserrat, certain acts of Parliament of the United Kingdom extended to Montserrat, orders in the council made by the British Crown on behalf of the Territory in the Privy Council and English common law. Montserrat falls under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeal). The Court of Appeal is an itinerant court, established under West Indies Associated States Supreme Court Order No. 223 of 1967, whose sittings rotate among its nine members, including Montserrat. The final court of appeal for civil and criminal matters is the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The British Overseas Territories Act 2002 provides for the granting of British citizenship to the citizens of British overseas territories.

5. As previously reported, the then Premier of Montserrat, addressing the Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, held in Quito from 30 May to 1 June 2012, stated that Montserrat was a fully internally self-governing Territory where all executive decisions were made by the local Cabinet. He further stated that there was no public interest whatsoever in separating from the United Kingdom. The continuing relationship with the United Kingdom was one made by free choice, and the people of the island did not see themselves as being a colonized people. He recommended that the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples remove Montserrat from its decolonization discussions.

II. Budget

6. According to the administering Power, the public sector in Montserrat continues to be dependent on budgetary aid from the United Kingdom. The 2017/18 budget statement of the territorial Government delivered in June 2017 indicated that the estimate of recurring revenue for 2017/18 was EC$ 128 million, including the EC$ 78 million in budgetary aid from the United Kingdom that accounted for approximately 61 per cent of revenue. Total expenditure is expected to be EC$ 160 million, with recurring expenditure at EC$ 128 million. According to the administering Power, in addition to the above-mentioned contribution to the recurring budget, the Government of Montserrat estimates revenue of approximately EC$ 17.3 million from United Kingdom-funded capital investment in the 2017/18 budget period.

7. According to the administering Power, individual residents are taxed on their worldwide income from all sources. Tax is also levied on the chargeable income paid by any incorporated company, building society or body of persons. While companies pay a tax of 30 per cent on profits, there is no capital gains tax.

8. According to the administering Power, the Territory benefits from an allocation of approximately €18.4 million for the period 2014–2020, under the eleventh European Development Fund. The agreement was signed in December 2017.

III. Economic conditions

A. General

9. According to statistics provided by the administering Power, real economic growth in Montserrat has continued to be modest, estimated at 2.03 per cent in 2016, compared with 0.42 per cent in 2015. Real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was approximately EC$ 34,891 in 2016. An economic growth strategy is currently being developed by the Government of Montserrat and is expected to be completed in 2018.

B. Agriculture and fisheries

10. As a result of ongoing volcanic activity, the most fertile agricultural land, pastures and fishing areas continue to be either restricted or inaccessible. In recent years, however, agricultural crop, fish and livestock production has reportedly increased.

11. In recent years, the territorial Government has continued to focus on agriculture as a key area on which to build its self-reliance policy. Initiatives included providing employment opportunities and encouraging more local production, notably by establishing backyard gardens and increasing the acreage devoted to cultivation. In March 2016, with the financial support of the Caribbean Development Bank and the territorial Government, an abattoir for the production of meat products on the island, in line with its public health legislation, was completed. According to the administering Power, to further support and build on the island's self-reliance policy, the agricultural strategic marketing plan was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture in December 2016, with the objective of reducing dependence on imported fresh food and exploring niche market opportunities for local food products.

C. Financial services

12. Montserrat is a member of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, which acts as the central bank for the Territory and is part of the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange and the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, the body that monitors anti-money-laundering activities and works to counter the financing of terrorism in the region. There are various banking facilities, including two commercial entities (the Bank of Montserrat and the Royal Bank of Canada) and several international banks. There is also a credit union and a building society.

13. According to the administering Power, in November 2015, Montserrat made a commitment to include beneficial ownership information in its existing public companies register. Legislation requiring legal entities to hold beneficial ownership information and to submit it for inclusion in the existing public register had been expected to be introduced in December 2017. At the time of writing, the target date for the addition of beneficial ownership information to the existing register was April 2018.

14. In the communiqué adopted at the sixth meeting of the Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council, held in London on 28 and 29 November 2017, the overseas territories and the United Kingdom welcomed the progress made by the overseas territories with financial centres in implementing the arrangements set out in the exchange of notes on law enforcement exchange of beneficial ownership information, including establishing new and secure systems for the collection, exchange and use of beneficial ownership data, where they did not already exist. The Joint Ministerial Council committed itself to reviewing the effectiveness of the arrangements six months prior to their implementation deadline. It welcomed the cooperation of the overseas territories in international efforts to promote tax transparency and tackle financial crime and the constructive engagement of the overseas territories with the Code of Conduct Group (Business Taxation) of the European Union and at the first meeting of the Global Forum on Asset Recovery. The Joint Ministerial Council reiterated its commitment to showing leadership in tackling corruption and committed itself to prioritizing further work to enable the timely extension to the territories of the application of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, in particular when territories have requested such an extension, and to set a clear path for that process, building on the meeting held during the seventh session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, held in Vienna from 6 to 10 November 2017.

D. Tourism

15. The redevelopment of the tourism industry, which was the main contributor to GDP prior to the volcanic eruption in 1995, continues to be a priority for the territorial Government. In September 2016, it was announced that the territorial Government would establish a new investment and promotion agency as a statutory body to better address the need for tourism investment in Montserrat and for an enhanced profile in the global tourism marketplace.

16. As previously reported, an improved ferry service with greater capacity was launched in December 2013. The ferry makes the trip between Montserrat and Antigua in about an hour, enabling Montserrat to market itself as a day-trip destination. According to the administering Power, the ferry service was suspended in April 2016 for contractual reasons, and, after a full procurement process, a new service came into operation on 2 December 2016.

17. According to the administering Power, the total number of visitor arrivals in 2016 was 19,144, of which 9,572 were visitors, 5,138 were tourists, 838 were excursionists and 3,596 were cruise passenger arrivals. Efforts have been made to attract cruise ships to the island and to promote escorted tours to the abandoned capital, Plymouth.

E. Construction

18. The physical development plan for the period 2013–2022 maps out what the territorial Government envisions for developing the northern portion of the Territory and provides a framework to help to meet the objectives set out in the sustainable development plan, addressing issues such as land availability, limited resources and infrastructure development.

F. Utilities and communication

19. A statutory body, Montserrat Utilities Limited, distributes water and electricity in the Territory. According to the administering Power, the entire population enjoys access to a plentiful supply of good potable water, and about 98 per cent of residents are connected to the water system. The water section of the company also has responsibility over the sewage treatment in some areas, notably Lookout and Davy Hill.

20. For its part, in 2016 the territorial Government continued to promote the development of a national energy policy, moving away from inefficient containerized high-speed diesel generators. According to the administering Power, it is expected that sufficient geothermal energy resources will eventually be made available to meet the demand for electricity. In his 2017/18 budget statement, the Premier of Montserrat indicated that a new 1.5 megawatt diesel generator had been successfully installed on 28 February 2017, that drilling of a third well had been completed within the period required and that, although the testing of the source of the well had been delayed, it was anticipated that the cleaning and testing phase would commence soon. The Premier added that the energy policy and action plan for the period up to 2030, which his administration had commissioned and delivered, included an energy strategy and sustainable energy plan.

21. In addition to the ferry service, Montserrat and Antigua and Barbuda are also connected by scheduled and charter air services operated by two companies. Montserrat is a member of the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority and of Air Safety Support International, which regulates the Territory's airspace and airline.

IV. Social conditions

A. General

22. The volcanic crisis has had a profound effect on traditional social structures and support systems in the Territory. Many families and communities have been split up and relocated to various parts of the world. According to the administering Power, social welfare services in Montserrat continue to include monthly financial assistance, rental assistance and one-time assistance for basic items. According to the administering Power, the United Kingdom and the United Nations Children's Fund

(UNICEF) continue to support the development of integrated delivery of social services in Montserrat.

B. Labour

23. According to the administering Power, the working population of Montserrat comprises about 2,700 persons, approximately 71 per cent of whom are Montserratians. Labour relations are governed by the Employment Act and the Labour Code, both revised in 2012, under which the Department of Labour provides mediation and conciliation services, and the Labour Tribunal settles disputes. At the time of writing, a new survey of the labour force was expected to be completed in 2018.

24. The Labour Code, as revised in 2012, sets out minimum conditions of employment and establishes the procedures for the settlement of labour disputes, providing for equality of treatment in employment, irrespective of an employee's race, colour, sex, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, nationality, political opinion or affiliation, disability, family responsibilities, pregnancy, marital status or age. According to the administering Power, in 2015, the Department of Labour submitted recommendations to the Attorney General for the review and update of technical regulations associated with the Labour Code and the territorial Government reconstituted the Labour Advisory Board, which provides advice on the desirability of establishing a national minimum wage. According to the administering Power, the Statistics Department of Montserrat is currently undertaking work to establish the appropriate level of the minimum wage. In 2016, the territorial Government continued to address the entrenched shortage of skilled labour by providing relocation incentives to Montserratians and granting work permits to non-Montserratians in order to meet the demand for professional and other skilled labour. Work permits are granted under the Immigration Act as revised in 2008.

25. The labour needs assessment completed in July 2016, which outlined the current capacity and the future needs of labour, was distributed to the administering Power. The recommendations contained therein included a closer look at the educational curriculum aiming at filling the gaps in labour needs, and are currently under review.

C. Education

26. Montserrat has educational infrastructure and services that provide full access to primary and secondary education. Compulsory education starts at age 5 and continues until age 16. According to the administering Power, in 2016, two of the primary schools were private, two were public and the only secondary school was also public; a total of 62 pupils graduated from the secondary school in 2016.

27. The education development plan for the period 2012–2020 sets out the guidelines for the Ministry of Education in providing for early childhood, primary, secondary and post-secondary education, in addition to special needs, teacher training and education support services. There are several government day-care facilities and nursery schools and a privately owned early childhood facility. According to the administering Power, a child safeguarding review was completed in 2015 and a number of recommendations were made for enhanced inter-agency coordination in order to better protect children. A multi-agency protocol has been developed, together with revised procedures and an ongoing programme of legislative reform, to ensure

that children are better protected. Technical cooperation was provided through various projects, including work with social workers and probation officers to help to build capacity at the local level and create sustainable change. All of those measures form the basis for the strengthened coordination recommended in the review.

28. The Montserrat Community College, which is partly subsidized and based in Salem, offers advanced academic courses for students between 16 and 18 years of age, as well as technical skills courses. The University of the West Indies maintains an extramural department adjacent to the Community College. Postgraduate students can study for a variety of long-distance degrees from the University.

29. Students from overseas territories benefit from the home student rate for school fees at British universities, provided that they have lived in a British overseas territory, the European Economic Area or Switzerland for the three years prior to the first academic year of their course of study. In addition, those students have access to funding provided by the European Union for higher or vocational education. In 2016, two students from Montserrat were awarded the Chevening scholarship by the Government of the United Kingdom to study in the United Kingdom. In addition, in accordance with decision 2013/755 of the Council of the European Union on the association of the overseas countries and territories with the European Union, the European Union provides access to funding for higher education and vocational education.

D. Public health

30. The Ministry of Health is responsible for providing primary and secondary health-care services, environmental health services and foster care, in addition to health-related policy advice in areas such as general medical care and surgical care, diagnostic testing, eye and ear care and medication. The territorial Government offers free emergency dental services for school-age children, older persons, pregnant women, teachers, nurses, and police and fire officers, in addition to providing highly specialized health services through arrangements for a number of specialists to visit the Territory. At the same time, protocols are in place for emergency medical evacuation to Antigua and Barbuda and Guadeloupe.

31. The Territory's health facilities include the 30-bed Glendon Hospital in Saint John's, which offers services relating to routine health issues, X-rays and minor operations, in addition to several primary care clinics. According to the administering Power, public consultations on the potential sites for the construction of new hospital facilities are ongoing, with the aim of building the new hospital by 2019. A recent report commissioned by the Government of Montserrat sets out potential ways forward with regard to the scale, scope and location of the new hospital.

32. According to the Pan American Health Organization, Montserrat has an effective primary health care system, and basic secondary care services are available at one hospital. There are no tertiary facilities available. To address that gap, in its national sustainable development plan for the period 2008–2020, entitled "A healthy and wholesome Montserrat", the Government of Montserrat indicated that its goal was to ensure that residents of Montserrat had access to secondary and tertiary health care at affordable prices by 2020. Noncommunicable diseases remain the leading causes of morbidity and mortality; in the period 2010–2015, they were the leading causes of consultations at the district health centres and admissions to Glendon Hospital. They were also the leading underlying causes of death.

33. At its sixth meeting, the Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council welcomed the fact that the Department of Health of the United Kingdom had continued its support for and commitment, in partnership with the territories and Public Health England, to raising awareness of international health regulations and to developing the relevant capacity to respond to major public health incidents, including outbreaks. The United Kingdom and the overseas territories discussed the importance of raising awareness of and building capacity and expertise in the territories for tackling non-communicable diseases, such as obesity and mental health problems, and the impact of those challenges on the populations of the territories. They committed themselves to working together on those important issues so as to share best practices and resources on preventive approaches and the ways in which they could be adapted to respond to local needs.

E. Crime and public safety

34. Under a five-year strategy, the Royal Montserrat Police Service is focusing on neighbourhood and intelligence-led policing, crime reduction and prevention and partnerships with the criminal justice system. According to the administering Power, Montserrat has a very low crime rate compared with the rest of the Caribbean region.

35. In 2017, the United Kingdom continued to provide funding for a law enforcement adviser based in Miami, United States of America, who coordinated, managed and facilitated training and the provision of strategic advice in order to introduce new techniques and skills to the Territory's law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, RFA *Mounts Bay* has been stationed in the Caribbean since January 2017, as part of the North Atlantic patrol tasking of the Royal Navy, ensuring a year-round maritime presence of the United Kingdom and providing humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and crisis communications support in the region. The ship also worked with other regional navies and coast guards to combat illegal activities on the high seas. RFA *Mounts Bay* and HMS *Ocean* provided vital humanitarian relief to the region, in particular to the three Territories — Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands — affected by Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria, in September.

F. Human rights

36. Under the Territory's Constitution, provision is made regarding the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual. Major international and European human rights instruments have been extended to Montserrat. In addition, according to the administering Power, Montserrat has requested the extension to the Territory of the ratification by the United Kingdom of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and aims to complete that process by 8 March 2018, to mark International Women's Day.

37. According to the information provided by the administering Power, currently there are no government bodies or non-governmental organizations addressing human rights issues in Montserrat. In September 2016, a representative from the island was sent to the first Overseas Territories Human Rights Conference with a view to establishing a human rights body to address those concerns.

38. At the sixth meeting of the Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council, the United Kingdom and the leaders of the overseas territories discussed their shared

resolve to continue to promote respect for human rights and compliance with international obligations in the territories. In the communiqué adopted at that meeting, they welcomed the constructive engagement of the territories in the preparations for the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council in that regard. The leaders of the overseas territories also reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the highest possible standards for the protection of children and promotion of children's welfare in the territories. At the meeting, the United Kingdom and the overseas territories discussed the progress made in promoting interagency cooperation in the territories and the development of national response plans to define policy priorities, noted the particular challenges for those territories affected by the recent hurricanes and agreed that children's welfare should remain a central priority for recovery plans, including through the reconstruction of schools. In addition, they welcomed the progress made under a memorandum of understanding to promote more effective collaboration between the overseas territories for the safeguarding of children.

V. Environment and volcanic activity

39. Following the eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano in 1995, an exclusion zone comprising roughly the southern two thirds of the island was established. Since the last major eruptive activity, in February 2010, the volcano has been in a state of pause and some restrictions in access to zone C, which is part of the outer exclusion zone, were lifted in 2014, allowing unrestricted access to some areas.

40. According to the administering Power, Montserrat has a clearly defined institutional framework for disaster response, which was tested in 2013. A hurricane plan, which was produced in 2013 and is revised annually, outlines the major tasks to be undertaken by the Territory's agencies, ministries or departments as part of the emergency management system in planning for and responding to tropical weather systems.

41. In the communiqué adopted at the sixth meeting of the Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council, the Governments of the United Kingdom and the overseas territories recognized that the destruction wrought by Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria had served as a reminder of the vulnerability of the overseas territories to climate change-related events and the devastating effect that they could have on the lives and livelihoods of those who lived there. They committed themselves to continuing the practice of mutual engagement ahead of international forums on climate change, to ensure that the views and priorities of the overseas territories were fully reflected in negotiations. It was agreed that a representative from the territories would attend the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Katowice, Poland, from 3 to 14 December 2018, as part of the delegation of the United Kingdom, highlighting the value of their presence in helping to amplify the shared message of the need for a high degree of ambition on climate change-related targets. The United Kingdom reiterated its commitment to working with the overseas territories on the issue of extending the application of treaties concerning climate change to the territories, including taking forward the work to extend its ratification of the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol to those territories that had indicated their readiness for it, through initial consultation with territories that had an interest in participating in meetings concerning the Paris Agreement to be held in the first half of 2018. The importance of work in the territories on climate change adaptation and

mitigation and collaboration between the territories to share best practices on environmental management and climate change issues, including through the annual meetings of ministers of the environment of the territories, was emphasized.

VI. Relations with international organizations and partners

42. Montserrat is an associate member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and its subsidiary bodies. According to the administering Power, the Territory continues to maintain a bilateral dialogue with the International Monetary Fund, involving the public sector, banking, business and union representatives.

43. Montserrat is a founding member of both the Caribbean Community and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and a member of the institutions associated with those organizations, including the University of the West Indies, the Caribbean Development Bank and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, in addition to the Assembly of the OECS, which was established in 2012 under the Revised Treaty of Basseterre to support the legislative work of OECS. Moreover, the Territory has observer status with the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force and is a member of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism.

44. As a Non-Self-Governing Territory of the United Kingdom, Montserrat is associated with the European Union but is not a part of it. Under decision 2013/755 of the Council of the European Union, which, according to the administrative Power, was approved, among other things, in an effort to move away from a classic development cooperation approach to a reciprocal partnership that promotes sustainable development and the values and standards of the European Union in the wider world, the Territory is in partnership with the European Union.

45. According to the communiqué adopted at the sixth meeting of the Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council, the United Kingdom and the overseas territories continued their dialogue on the implications for the latter of the decision by the United Kingdom to leave the European Union (known as "Brexit"). In addition, it was indicated that a clear objective of the exit negotiations was to achieve an agreement that worked for all parts of the United Kingdom family, and the United Kingdom affirmed that it would seek to ensure that the security and economic sustainability of the overseas territories was preserved and, where possible, strengthened post-"Brexit".

VII. Future status of the Territory

A. Position of the territorial Government

46. Information on the position of the territorial Government regarding the future status of Montserrat is set out in section I above.

B. Position of the administering Power

47. At the 8th meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), on 9 October 2017, during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, the representative of the United Kingdom stated that the

relationship of the Government of the United Kingdom with its overseas territories was a modern one based on partnership, shared values and the right of the people of each Territory to choose to remain British. He said that the territories were an integral part of global Britain and the United Kingdom's commitment to its territories' security and prosperity remained strong, as demonstrated by the swift and comprehensive response to the devastation wreaked in some territories by Hurricane Irma, and the ongoing recovery efforts.

48. The representative of the United Kingdom went on to say that, the Joint Ministerial Council was the primary forum for high-level political dialogue between the United Kingdom and the overseas territories. As the United Kingdom negotiated to leave the European Union, it was fully committed to taking into account the priorities of the overseas territories, including Gibraltar. The United Kingdom-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council on European Union negotiations had been established to discuss the priorities of the territories and determine further areas for collective engagement. He added that the fundamental responsibility of the Government of the United Kingdom, under international law and the Charter of the United Nations, was to ensure the security and good governance of the territories and their peoples.

49. In the communiqué adopted at the sixth meeting of the Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council, the Government of the United Kingdom and the leaders of the overseas territories indicated that the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, as enshrined in the Charter, applied to the peoples of the overseas territories. They reaffirmed the importance of promoting the right of the peoples of the territories to self-determination, a collective responsibility of all parts of the Government of the United Kingdom. They committed themselves to exploring the ways in which the overseas territories could maintain international support in countering hostile sovereignty claims. For those Territories with permanent populations who wished it, the United Kingdom would continue to support their requests for removal from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Government of the United Kingdom and the leaders of the overseas territories agreed that the fundamental structure of their constitutional relationships had been the right one — powers were devolved to the elected Governments of the territories to the maximum extent possible consistent with the United Kingdom retaining those powers necessary to discharge its sovereign responsibilities. They also agreed upon the need to continue their engagement on those issues to ensure that constitutional arrangements worked and were developed effectively to promote the best interests of the territories and of the United Kingdom.

VIII. Action taken by the General Assembly

50. On 7 December 2017, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 72/103 on the basis of the report of the Special Committee for 2017 (A/72/23) and on the subsequent recommendation by the Fourth Committee. In that resolution, the General Assembly:

(a) Reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of Montserrat to self-determination, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), containing the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples;

(b) Also reaffirmed that, in the process of decolonization of Montserrat, there was no alternative to the principle of self-determination, which was also a fundamental human right, as recognized under the relevant human rights conventions;

(c) Further reaffirmed that it was ultimately for the people of Montserrat to determine freely their future political status in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter, the Declaration and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and in that connection called upon the administering Power, in cooperation with the territorial Government and appropriate bodies of the United Nations system, to develop political education programmes for the Territory in order to foster an awareness among the people of their right to self-determination in conformity with the legitimate political status options, based on the principles clearly defined in Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) and other relevant resolutions and decisions;

(d) Recalled the 2011 Constitution of Montserrat and the work of the territorial Government with respect to moving forward to consolidate the gains provided for in the Constitution;

(e) Requested the administering Power to assist the Territory by facilitating its work concerning public outreach efforts, consistent with Article 73 *b* of the Charter, and in that regard called upon the relevant United Nations organizations to provide assistance to the Territory, if requested;

(f) Welcomed the Territory's participation in the work of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean;

(g) Encouraged the Territory to continue to participate in the activities of the Special Committee, including regional seminars;

(h) Called upon the administering Power, the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, as well as regional and other organizations, to continue to provide assistance to the Territory in alleviating the consequences of the volcanic eruption;

(i) Stressed the importance of the Special Committee being apprised of the views and wishes of the people of Montserrat and enhancing its understanding of their conditions, including the nature and scope of the existing political and constitutional arrangements between Montserrat and the administering Power;

(j) Called upon the administering Power to participate in and cooperate fully with the work of the Special Committee in order to implement the provisions of Article 73 *e* of the Charter and the Declaration and in order to advise the Committee on the implementation of the provisions under Article 73 *b* of the Charter on efforts to promote self-government in Montserrat, and encouraged the administering Power to facilitate visiting and special missions to the Territory;

(k) Reaffirmed the responsibility of the administering Power under the Charter to promote the economic and social development and preserve the cultural identity of the Territory, and requested the administering Power to take steps to enlist and make effective use of all possible assistance, on both a bilateral and a multilateral basis, in the strengthening of the economy of the Territory;

(l) Took into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, stressed the importance of fostering the economic and social sustainable development of the Territory by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for

all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion and promoting the integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems that supports, inter alia, economic, social and human development, while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration, restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges, and strongly urged the administering Power to refrain from undertaking any kind of illicit, harmful and unproductive activities, including the use of the Territory as a tax haven, that were not aligned with the interest of the people of the Territory;

(m) Requested the Territory and the administering Power to take all measures necessary to protect and conserve the environment of the Territory against any degradation, and once again requested the specialized agencies concerned to monitor environmental conditions in the Territory and to provide assistance to the Territory, consistent with their prevailing rules of procedure;

(n) Requested the Special Committee to continue to examine the question of Montserrat and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and on the implementation of the resolution.

Annex

Map of Montserrat